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DOT's Drug Program

Random Testing: How it Works

Revised March 1989

U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary of Transportation

TD 1.2:

Achieving a drug-free America is one of our nation's highest priorities. Since transportation affects all of us on a daily basis, we at the Department of Transportation (DOT) have a unique opportunity and responsibility to help the country achieve a drug-free transportation system. Nowhere does the private choice to use drugs have more devastating public consequences than on our nation's roads, rails, water and airways. The traveling public expects no less than our full commitment to the goal of a drug-free transportation system.

The Department has developed a multi-faceted approach to meeting this goal. It focuses on awareness, education, counseling, rehabilitation, and testing. DOT has developed and is conducting a series of drug awareness seminars and educational programs to increase the public's awareness of the pervasive nature of illegal drug use and to help those using drugs make the decision to stop. DOT's program also provides for drug testing as a deterrent to drug use. This facet of the program includes six types of employee drug testing: 1) random, 2) post-accident, 3) pre-employment/pre-appointment, 4) reasonable suspicion, 5) follow-up, and 6) voluntary.

Random Testing

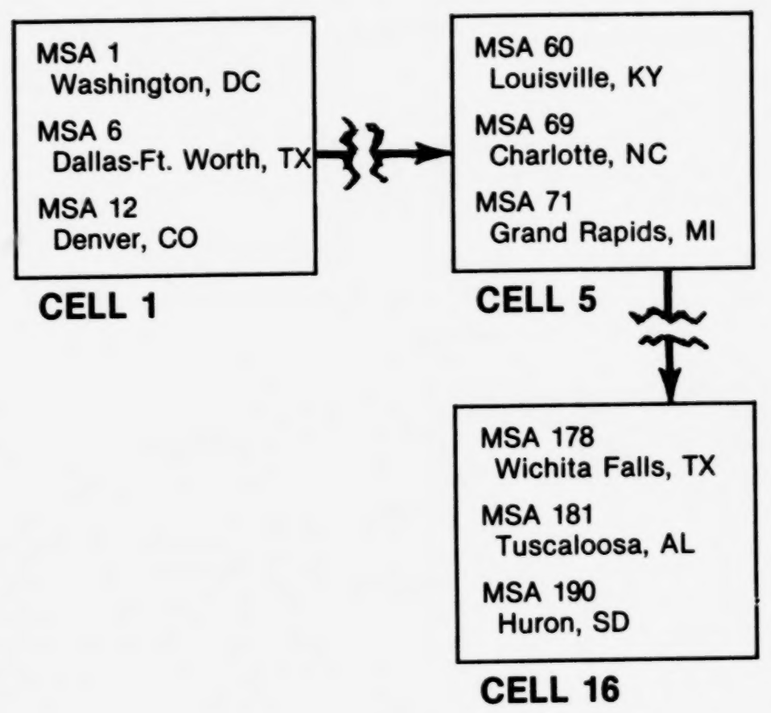
The DOT random drug testing program covers only those civilian employees in safety or security sensitive positions. This includes air traffic and marine traffic controllers, electronics technicians and mechanics, railroad safety inspectors and highway safety specialists, criminal investigators, and persons holding top-secret clearances. There are approximately 32,000 employees in these positions throughout the Department.

The Department's random testing method is designed to assure that all employees in safety or security sensitive positions are subject to random identification and drug testing on a statistically equal basis with respect to their duty location.

The identification of employees for random drug testing is accomplished using a computer draw from a single pool of all the employees who occupy safety or security sensitive positions. The pool, and the selection process, are managed by the Drug Awareness and Education Division of the Office of the Secretary. Thus, there is no opportunity for modal or local management influence on the selection/non-selection of employees for testing.

The 32,000 employees who are subject to random testing are located in approximately 900 duty locations throughout the country. As a first step in structuring the random sample, all of these employees are identified with their duty locations. Then, the duty locations are grouped geographically into 192 metropolitan statistical areas (areas). The areas are ordered by size, largest to smallest, based on the number of eligible employees. These areas are then grouped into sixteen "cells" each containing twelve areas.

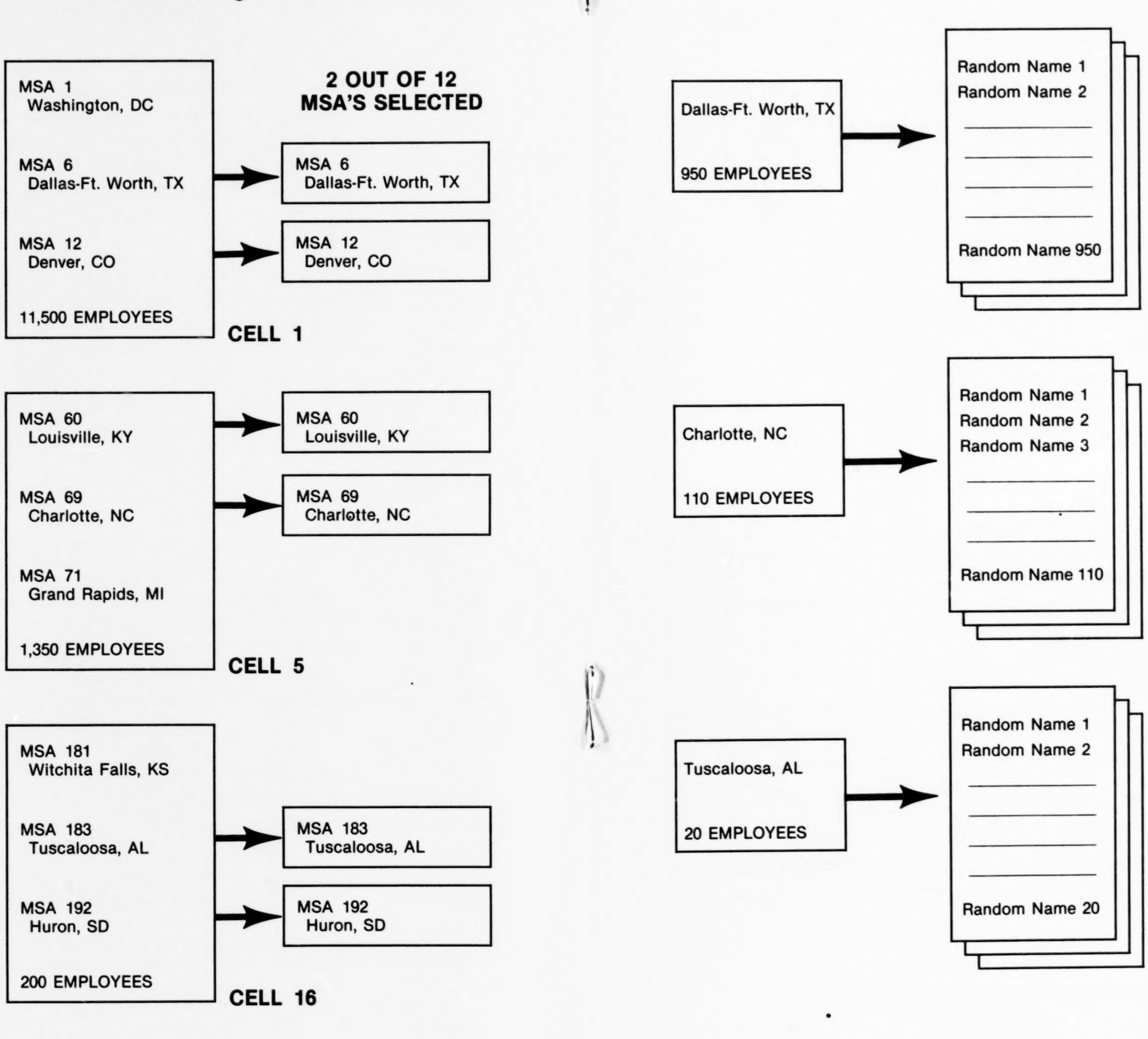
Thus, the twelve largest metropolitan areas — those with the largest DOT employee contingent eligible for random testing, for instance Washington, D.C. and New York, N.Y.— are in Cell -1. The twelve smallest areas—with the fewest, eligible DOT employees are in cities such as Tuscaloosa, Alabama and Huron, South Dakota and are in the last cell—Cell -16.



The Random Sample is Composed of 192 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) Grouped into 16 "Cells" of Approximately 12 Areas Each.

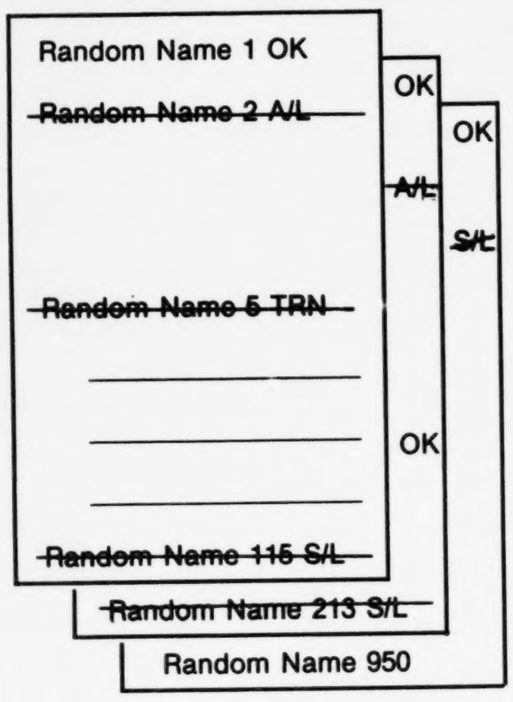
A pre-determined number of metropolitan areas are randomly selected from each cell each month. This ensures that duty locations of all sizes are covered. The same number of areas are selected from each cell. This random sampling strategy means that all metropolitan areas have an equal chance of being selected each and every month. It also means that the entire sample "universe" is open for selection every month and that an area may be selected more than once, or not at all, during the course of a year. Conceivably, the same metropolitan area could be selected during two successive months.

From the randomly selected areas, all safety or security sensitive employees are then randomly identified as possible candidates for testing during that month. As a result, the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas metropolitan area, which has approximately 950 employees subject to random testing, would have all 950 employees listed in random order on test lists broken down to routing-symbol level. The Tuscaloosa, Alabama area, which has 20 employees, would have a test list of twenty.



A preset precentage of the randomly ordered employees from each test list are then selected for testing. Testing begins with the first name on the list and moves sequentially down the list. If the employee is on pre-approved annual or sick leave or the employee is unavailable for any legitimate reason at the time of testing, he or she will not be tested. The random list is annotated to indicate the reasons for an employee not being available. Testing is completed when the present percentage of collections is achieved, or the bottom of the list is reached, whichever comes first.

DALLAS-FT. WORTH, TX



CHARLOTTE, NC

~~Random Name 1 A/L~~
~~Random Name 2 S/L~~
Random Name 3 OK

Random Name 42 OK
~~Random Name 43 TRN~~
~~Random Name 44 S/L~~
Random Name 110

TUSCALOOSA, AL

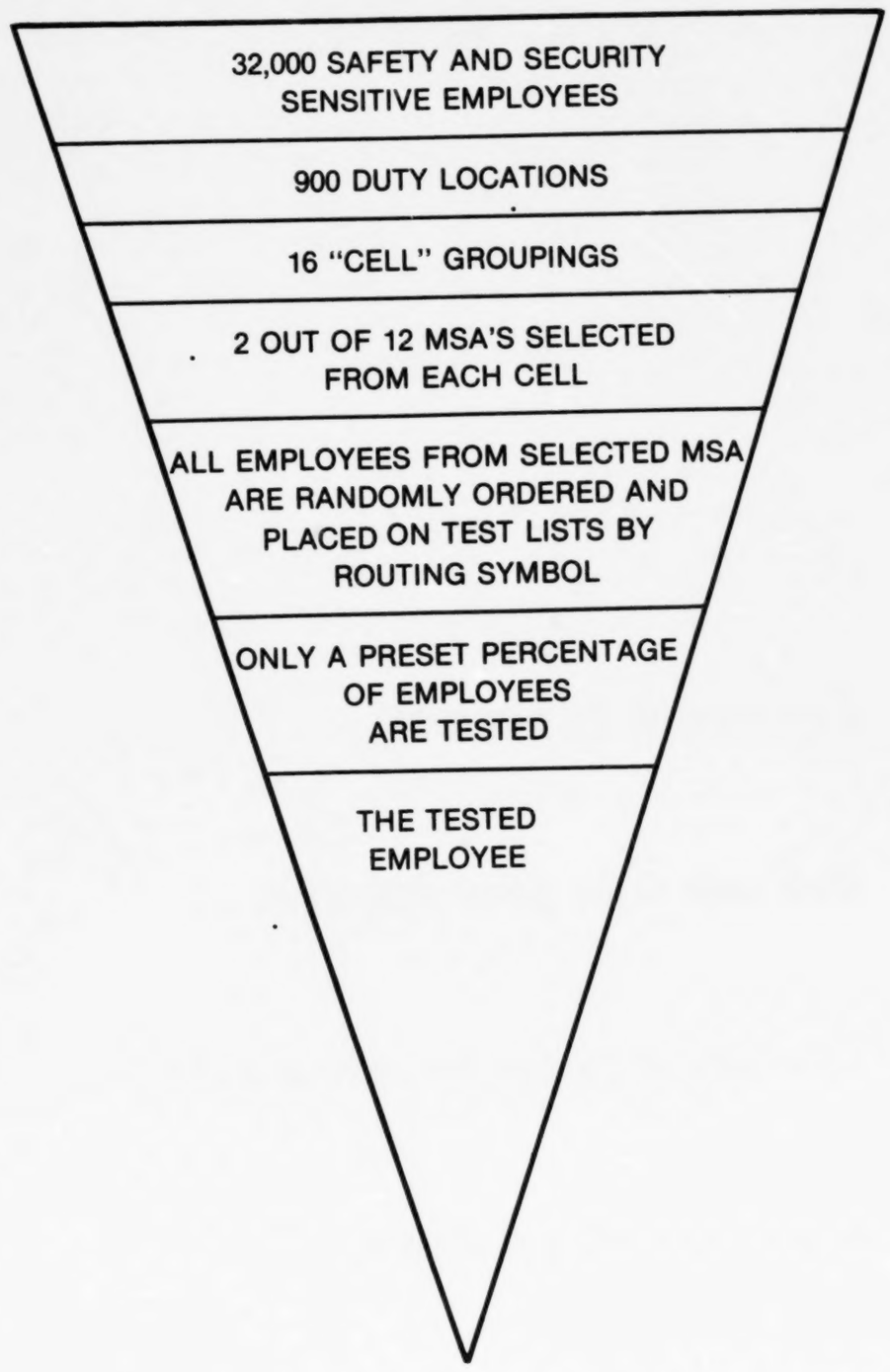
Random Name 1 OK

~~Random Name 3 S/L~~

Random Name 8 OK

Random Name 20

The inverted pyramid below illustrates the steps the random selection process takes in identifying an eligible employee for drug testing from the 32,000 safety and security sensitive employees in the Department's drug testing program.


32,000 SAFETY AND SECURITY SENSITIVE EMPLOYEES
900 DUTY LOCATIONS
16 "CELL" GROUPINGS
2 OUT OF 12 MSA'S SELECTED FROM EACH CELL
ALL EMPLOYEES FROM SELECTED MSA ARE RANDOMLY ORDERED AND PLACED ON TEST LISTS BY ROUTING SYMBOL
ONLY A PRESET PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES ARE TESTED
THE TESTED EMPLOYEE

We hope this brief explanation of the Department's random testing methodology helps you better understand how your facility—and you as one of its employees—are eligible for selection. The role you are playing is important in helping assure the nation's traveling public that its airways, waterways, rails, roads and mass transit systems are safe and drug-free.

You owe it to yourself. . .

You owe it to your family. . .

You owe it to the traveling public. . .

If you use illegal drugs, STOP!

If you don't use them, DON'T START!

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